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In Our View / State Supreme Court endorsements

Retain Stephens and Johnson on high court

Back in the mid-'70s, you could count on the Owl Party to at least provide some entertainment value in the state voter's guide.

The Owl Party, born in an Olympia nightclub, ran a slate of tongue-in-cheek candidates for state offices, promising "Out With Logic, On With Lunacy." The Owl Party hooted its last a long time ago, but what look like tongue-in-cheek candidates still surface from time to time.

This year they've perched in two races for the state Supreme Court.

John "Zamboni" Scannell is running against Justice Debra L. Stephens, who is seeking her second six-year term. And Eddie Yoon is running against Associate Chief Justice Charles W. Johnson, who joined the court in 1991 and is its longest serving jurist.

[In his statement](#) in the state voter's guide, Yoon makes the odd claim that he's the first Korean-American attorney in the Northwest and recently [advised The Stranger's election team](#) to smell their urine for health purposes. When not running for Supreme Court, Yoon lives in South Korea, where he is a law professor at a women's college in Seoul, where he also helps his wife run a small hotel.

Scannell, who came by his nickname because he drove the ice-conditioning machine at Seattle Thunderbird hockey games, was [disbarred in 2010 by the state Supreme Court](#), the same court he seeks to join, for obstructing the state bar association's conflict-of-interest investigation regarding his representation of a husband and wife charged with theft.

We could fault Stephens, who earned her law degree from Gonzaga and is the court's only Eastern Washington representative, for some of her decisions regarding open government issues, but she has broad and well-earned support from fellow judges, attorneys, officials and others.

Johnson, whose libertarian streak can send him off in unpredictable directions when it comes to civil rights and public records cases, has nonetheless demonstrated a commitment to government accountability and personal liberties.

It goes without saying The Herald Editorial Board endorses Stephens and Johnson.

Speaking of Owl Party brand lunacy: State voters are being asked to weigh in on two advisory votes. The outcomes of both questions are nonbinding and nothing more than opinion polls masquerading as ballot issues.

We hesitate to go into detail, but: Advisory Vote No. 8 asks if agricultural tax breaks for the marijuana industry should be repealed or maintained. Advisory Vote No. 9 asks the same question of "the leasehold excise tax on certain leasehold interests in tribal property," with an impact of \$1.3 million on

government spending over the next 10 years.

You're being asked because such “advisory votes” on decisions — already made by the Legislature — are a requirement of Tim Eyman's Initiative 960, part of which was found unconstitutional last year. You won't find much help in the state voters' guide in understanding either issue because the Secretary of State is barred by the initiative from providing any context or explanation.

Vote to repeal or maintain on the “advisory” issues, but, frankly, it's a waste of ink.

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